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ABSTRACT

This study examines the history, development, and important characteristics of Project: LEARN, a community-based literacy program in Cleveland (Ohio). The program started in 1974 and is an affiliate of Laubach Literacy International. It has successfully used volunteer tutors to teach basic reading and writing skills to thousands of illiterate adults. Data collected for this case study were derived from interviews conducted with present and former staff of Project: LEARN, as well as from correspondence, board meeting minutes, reports, newsletters, publicity releases, newspaper articles, and an annual meeting of Project: LEARN. Related literature is reviewed; and the following characteristics of Project: LEARN are described: mission statement and purpose, organization and structure, facilities, programs, student support groups, funding, budget, tutor training, educational materials, and future plans. (Contains 38 references.) (Author/MES)

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PROJECT: LEARN
A CASE STUDY OF AN OHIO LITERACY PROGRAM

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Marjorie K. Bashaw

August, 1993

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ABSTRACT

Every year the number of adults lacking basic literacy skills increases. More effort must be made to guarantee a reasonable standard of living for the entire United States population into the twenty-first century.

This study examines the history, development, and important characteristics of Project: LEARN, a community-based literacy program in Cleveland, Ohio. This program started in 1974 and is an affiliate of Laubach Literacy International. It has successfully used volunteer tutors to teach basic reading and writing skills to thousands of illiterate adults. Characteristics described include mission statement and purpose; organization and structure; facilities; programs; student support groups; funding; budget; tutor training; educational materials; and future plans.

Project: LEARN has endured and grown because of its focus on providing basic literacy tutoring and because of the support it receives from the Greater Cleveland community. A sincere interest by staff and volunteers for the achievement of literacy students and the attainment of their goals also has contributed to the organization's success and longevity. Other communities as well as libraries should find this study's investigation of Project: LEARN beneficial as they seek to initiate or improve their own literacy programs.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ---------- 1

Purpose of the Study ---------- 3
Definitions of Terms ---------- 3
Limitations of the Study ---------- 4

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ---------- 5

III. METHODOLOGY ---------- 13

IV. FINDINGS: HISTORY OF PROJECT: LEARN ---------- 14

Current Mission Statement and Purposes ---------- 17
Organization and Structure ---------- 18
Governance ---------- 18
Committees ---------- 19
Membership in Project: LEARN ---------- 20
Administration/Management ---------- 20
Facilities ---------- 21
Programs ---------- 21
Books for Adult New Readers ---------- 25
Friends of Project: LEARN ---------- 27
Student Support Group ---------- 28
Funding ---------- 28
Budget ---------- 29
Tutor Training ---------- 29
Educational Materials ---------- 30
Outlook for the Future ---------- 31

V. CONCLUSIONS ---------- 33

NOTES ---------- 35

BIBLIOGRAPHY ---------- 39

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I. INTRODUCTION

Illiteracy has been a part of American society since the founding of the United States, but in recent decades this problem has escalated to the extent that it now threatens the nation's social and economic stability. As competition in world markets increases, the United States work force must acquire and maintain the skills needed to keep this country viable in a global economy. Similarly, the gap between the rich and the poor in the nation should not be allowed to continue to increase. All United States citizens need to be equipped with the basic skills required to survive and thrive in a society shifting from an industrial age to a service and information age. Every year the number of adults lacking basic skills increases. Although many are helped through existing literacy programs, the numbers reached are not great enough to eliminate illiteracy, and more effort must be made to guarantee a reasonable standard of living for the entire United States population into the twenty-first century.

Fortunately, greater focus has been put on the problem of illiteracy in recent years. In July 1989 Library Journal began a regular column "Literacy Clearinghouse" to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas on combating the illiteracy problem. The 1991 White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services had literacy as one of its three focal points.[1] Perhaps most important is The National Literacy Act of 1991 signed by President Bush on July 25, 1991, the first legislation that addresses itself specifically to literacy. It proposes a ten-member Advisory Board to represent literacy organizations, businesses, students,

researchers, labor, and state and federal officials. In addition, a National Institute for Literacy will be formed with funding earmarked for 1992-1995. This organization is expected to promote research, provide training, analyze policy, distribute information about successful practices and methods, and develop criteria for reporting requirements, performance measures, and program effectiveness. New State Literacy Resource Centers will be given funds to promote model program methods and to establish new ways to coordinate services within and among states.[2]

Libraries and literacy have a natural connection. Libraries exist to promote and support lifelong reading and learning. Public libraries are constantly striving to connect local communities with their resources. It is therefore reasonable for libraries to reach out as well to the illiterate portion of their population by helping to develop and support local literacy efforts.

Project: LEARN is a successful literacy program in Cleveland, Ohio. Begun in 1974, Project: LEARN has endured and grown through the years and can serve as a model for the development of a community-based literacy program. Libraries in the Cleveland area provide varying degrees of support to Project: LEARN depending on their funding and staffing circumstances, their internal goals and objectives, their immediate community's needs, and the program's needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the successful literacy program Project: LEARN. This study investigates the following aspects of Project: LEARN: history; organization and structure; goals and objectives; recruitment of volunteers and students; demographics of volunteers and students; training of volunteers; educational materials and technology used; teaching methods; relationships with local government bodies, school districts, corporations, social service agencies, and libraries; facilities; publications; workplace, prison, and other special group literacy programs; activities to support the prevention of illiteracy; statistics on participation and evaluation; evolution into an independent agency; and future plans. Other communities and libraries should find this study's investigation of Project: LEARN beneficial as they seek to initiate or improve their own literacy programs.

Definitions of Terms

Functional illiterate - This is a person sixteen years of age or older who cannot read or write well enough to function successfully on the job and in today's society. This is the definition of illiteracy to which this research paper refers.

Family literacy - This involves family activities that promote literacy and help to emphasize to children the importance of education and reading.

Workplace literacy - This involves the basic skills needed in the workplace in order to be successful on the job. It can refer to skills beyond basic literacy to include the ability to process

and organize information and to use reading and writing to perform tasks.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) - This program is funded by the government to provide free education toward the attainment of General Education Development (GED) equivalency for adults.

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) - This Project: LEARN program teaches English to immigrants who speak a foreign language and little or no English. This term and ESL (English as a Second Language) are used interchangeably in this paper.

Laubach Literacy International - Dr. Frank Laubach, an American educator and missionary, developed in the 1930s the Each One Teach One model for literacy tutoring. Programs for training literacy and ESL tutors are available from this organization.

Limitations of the Study

This study is concerned primarily with reading and writing literacy skills and less with computation. It does not investigate aspects of computer or cultural literacy. It does not examine literacy programs in other countries, and emphasizes public library involvement in literacy promotion rather than academic library involvement. It does not investigate the causes of illiteracy in the United States.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Denise M. Davis argues for the importance of community-based literacy programs. She cites research which indicates that these are the most successful endeavors. Aspects which appear to influence success include community orientation; program independence; underserved populations; and student empowerment and learner-centered curriculum. Literacy programs need to fit into the communities they are serving.[3]

Floyd C. Dickman from the State Library of Ohio has discussed the range of appropriate literacy activity for all libraries. Each library should decide its own direction and how much of a commitment it can make in the use of materials, staff, and funds to address the illiteracy problems of its community. Generally, providing resources is the easiest way to get involved. The collection can be surveyed to see what is appropriate for adult new readers. Contacting providers of literacy, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs will enable librarians to determine what materials are needed. It might also be beneficial to have deposit collections at training sites in the community. There are many services librarians can provide, such as meeting rooms for instruction, tours and orientation sessions, publicity, production of bibliographies, and presentations to community groups. Contact should be maintained with all individuals, agencies, and organizations at the local level. Forming community coalitions can ensure that efforts are not duplicated and that common goals are met.[4]

Many reasons have been given for why some libraries have no specific programs of service for non-literates: lack of staff, inadequate budgets, lack of time for an additional emphasis. But Denise Fischer writes that every library can and should be involved. She has proposed six scenarios of library literacy support that encompass graduating levels of difficulty to implement. These examples show that literacy efforts do not have to be elaborate or costly. They range from having informational files on literacy providers and other educational resources, to having adult reader collections, to providing technologies and programs useful to students and tutors, to the most sophisticated scenario of incorporating into public service a curriculum to engage in actual literacy instruction.[5]

Thomas Szudy of The State Library of Ohio presents steps and actions that libraries can take to develop literacy programs for their communities. The three methods of involvement (initiating literacy programs, cooperating with existing programs, or establishing resource centers for literacy training and materials) are discussed in his article. He also shows the value of focusing activities on the specific needs of the community.[6]

Robert W. Weigl found in his research that sixty-five percent of library school students surveyed favored some level of library involvement in literacy programs beyond just providing adult new reader collections. Sixty-two percent wanted to be personally involved, but only thirty-seven percent thought libraries should spend more for literacy programs. Increased external funding was preferred.[7]

Karl O. Haigler has discussed the importance of linkages in literacy efforts because these programs are generally the last to be funded and the first to be cut. Staffing is usually done by part-time administrators and teachers, paraprofessionals, and volunteers. Literacy providers need to cooperate with other organizations, including other literacy providers, private businesses and corporations, and public agencies. Many community-based programs are able to reach those adults whom the more established, regularly funded programs are unable to attract or retain, and linkages can help to provide community literacy education for those who are most in need. Local literacy programs should build networks around the needs of adult learners, such as child care, counseling, and transportation. They should be advocates in helping students negotiate the welfare, job-training, and education bureaucracies. Private sector representatives need to advocate a literate workforce and accountability in real world terms for education.[8]

The Medina County District Library used an LSCA grant obtained through The State Library of Ohio to expand the existing Literacy Coalition by hiring two people from the local Joint Vocational Center and the Laubach Center to coordinate the literacy program. A building next to the library was used as a literacy office. Activities included conducting monthly meetings of the Literacy Coalition; recruiting new members; disseminating outreach materials; book clubs for low-level readers; seminars on the use of the library; film sessions on reading to children; a speaker on literacy for the community; expansion of the library

new reader collection; and education and training experience for volunteers and paid staff.[9]

Susan Malus tells of five new adult learning centers that were opened in October of 1985 by the Brooklyn Public Library in New York. Previously the library had offered free tutoring by trained volunteers. Now the learning centers also offer computer-assisted learning, ESL classes, a new collection of hi-lo books available for borrowing, and a new collection of reference materials for literacy professionals. The learning centers are part of a $35 million funding program by the City of New York to address adult literacy. This effort to formally educate illiterate adults is the largest ever in New York City and involved renovating sections of four of the libraries; hiring and training staff for the new positions of site coordinator, literacy advisor, and literacy administrative aide at each library; purchasing computers and software; training the many literacy staff members and volunteer tutors in use of the computer; carrying out a broad outreach program in each site's neighborhood; educating nonliteracy staff about what to expect from the program; and training new literacy workers in library procedures. A full-time reading specialist with expertise in reading instruction for adults, materials, and tutor training supervised implementation of the program. This learning center literacy approach is successful because it is exactly what the neighborhoods involved wanted and needed.[10]

The Toledo-Lucas County Public Library used an LSCA grant to help develop a Reading Enrichment Center that would house in one

area a variety of approaches to reading education including books, computer software, video programming, and books-on-tape. To promote the Reading Center as well as increase community awareness of illiteracy several 16mm films which dealt with the problem were purchased for lending to area groups. The Reading Center also loans out duplicate sets of its reference video collection and study guides for at home study. A literacy video has been produced, contact has been made with area churches, businesses, unions, and community centers, and posters, flyers, and public service announcements are being used to encourage those who need and want literacy aid to visit the library.[11]

The Siskiyou County Library READ (Reading, Education, and Development) Project is one of the original programs started through the California Literacy Campaign in 1983 and funded initially by an LSCA grant with continuing support from the California Library Services Act and other sources. The READ project serves most of the county's nine cities and numerous small towns with responsibilities shared between the county library and the Project. READ Radio is a series of radio dramas centered around literacy that entertain, inform, recruit, and fundraise. Dramatized tales tie in literacy messages with the content of each story. READ Radio contributes vitally to the future of the READ Project. The radio series is leased to other public library-sponsored adult literacy programs which pay a leasing fee. Institutional advertising in their listening areas then helps the other libraries make a profit to support their programs. However, the most crucial aspect of READ Radio is that it encourages

families to gather together to read with the help of an exciting radio drama.[12]

In Pittsburgh a program was begun in an effort to reach parents who weren't readers and who had few or no books in the home, as well as those who had not discovered the joy of reading to their children, or who needed to be shown that a rich, verbal, literary experience encourages children to become lifelong readers. Beginning with Books provided packets of books to be given to families in six health clinics that served geographic areas of need in the city of Pittsburgh. While the child was waiting to see a doctor, the Beginning with Books Counselor gave the family the gift packet of books, explained the importance of sharing books with children, and encouraged use of the public library. Although funded by foundations initially, Beginning with Books became affiliated with The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh as an outreach service to the underserved. Changes have occurred over time, and the program now serves over 3600 families in medical facilities, educational settings, counseling centers, child care facilities, social service organizations, and stress centers and shelters. In addition to being given free packets of three books, families can obtain a fourth book at their local library by redeeming a coupon enclosed in the packet. Visibility in the community has made fundraising easier than might be expected.[13]

Carole Talan discusses the need for family literacy programs, why libraries should be involved, what kinds of programs exist, and specifically what is being done through California's Families

for Literacy Program. The California State Library program provides $600,000 annually so that libraries which have adult literacy services can also provide services to the families of adult learners with preschool children. The program aims to enhance the preliteracy opportunities of these children by acquainting parents with the value and joy of reading as a family. Children who are talked to and read to by adults are likely to become successful readers and will be able to break the cycle of illiteracy. Talan convincingly concludes that the family literacy approach is a chance for libraries to do in one program the things that they do best, and that family literacy is no longer a luxury; it is now a necessity.[14]

The Greece (New York) Central School District Continuing Education Division provides adult education services for a suburban community of 90,000 and also attracts students from Rochester and surrounding New York communities. Funding comes from state aid, state and federal grants, and Board of Education assistance. Full-time and part-time teachers are employed. Students' individual educational goals are incorporated into the assignment of their materials so that by completing their program they are able to attain their goals. The Greece Central literacy program is well known for developing linkages with other community groups such as a major local industrial employer, the local law enforcement body, the county Social Service Department, and a public television station. Frequent communication with these groups occurs. The news media is used extensively to promote programs and student achievement and helps recruit new learners

to the program.[15]

Philadelphia's Center For Literacy (CFL) is the largest U.S. community-based adult literacy organization. With a staff of forty, CFL offers such diverse programs as reading classes in a homeless shelter, tutoring of prison inmates, and workplace literacy classes geared to specific occupations. CFL has programs aimed particularly at mothers and grandmothers who are caretakers of young children, and supports family literacy programs in schools. Nationally CFL is recognized for its tutor training, its development of reading materials for adult learners, and its research into what succeeds and what does not in adult literacy education. CFL teaches 2000 adults annually, with eight hundred volunteer tutors and twenty-one teachers in one-on-one or small classes. Approximately two-thirds of CFL's one million dollar budget is from state and federal funding, with the rest provided by corporate, foundation, and individual contributions.

Achieving personal goals is crucial to CFL's philosophy of learning. Students and tutors together create the student's program to fulfill his goals.

CFL has partnerships with many organizations and businesses in the Philadelphia area. The Free Library of Philadelphia provides learning sites at many of its branches, and the Library's Reader Development Program donates books and materials to literacy students. CFL appears to be similar to Project: LEARN in many ways although it is a considerably larger organization.[16]

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this research is that of the case study.

The data collected for this study was derived from interviews conducted with present and former staff of Project: LEARN, as well as from correspondence, board meeting minutes, reports, newsletters, publicity releases, and newspaper articles. Also, an annual meeting of Project: LEARN was attended.

Questions such as the following were asked:

1. How and why was Project: LEARN started? What is its history?
2. How is Project: LEARN funded? What are major items in its budget?
3. How and by whom is the program administered?
4. How many paid staff members does the program have? What are their responsibilities?
5. How are students recruited? What are the demographics of their population?
6. How are volunteers recruited? How are they trained?
7. What teaching methods and materials are used?
8. How is the program evaluated?
9. What libraries provide support and what kinds of support do they give?
10. What other local linkages does Project: LEARN have?
11. What facilities does Project: LEARN own or use?
12. What is Project: LEARN doing to try to prevent illiteracy?

IV. FINDINGS: HISTORY OF PROJECT: LEARN

Project: LEARN is a nonprofit educational corporation that provides basic reading and writing lessons for adults who are at least sixteen years old and out of school, and who read at a third grade level or lower. There is no other place in the Greater Cleveland community where low reading level adults can learn in a free, private, one-to-one setting that allows them to learn at a pace and in a style that best suits their individual needs.[17]

Project: LEARN (Let Every Adult Read Now) was begun in 1974 in an effort to address the illiteracy problem in the Cleveland, Ohio community. It was estimated that twenty percent of Greater Clevelanders could not read well. Staff members from Laubach Literacy Action in Syracuse, New York approached members of the Board of Trustees of the Council of Churches of Greater Cleveland (now the Interchurch Council) and proposed that they develop a community literacy program using Laubach techniques and materials to tutor adults in reading and writing. The Board of Trustees asked Nancy Oakley, a member of the Council of Churches' educational task force and an advocate for change in the Cleveland schools, to coordinate the volunteer adult literacy program.[18]

Oakley wrote a grant proposal to obtain funds and was awarded pilot funding of $30,000 over three years from the George Gund Foundation.[19]

The original goals of Project: LEARN were:

> (1) To establish a demonstration literacy project in Cleveland which, when successful, can be enlarged to reduce significantly the number of adult illiterates in Greater Cleveland by raising their reading skills to a seventh grade level.

(2) To create a resource bank of tutors to teach adults to read who will also become knowledgeable about and responsive to the needs of the disadvantaged community in Cleveland.[20]

Specific objectives were stated to achieve the organization's two broad goals:

(1) To establish a Task Force broadly representing the churches and the larger community to aid in the implementation of the project. The Task Force will serve as spokesman for the project, monitor its progress and evaluate the achievement of the objectives. The Education Coordinator of the Greater Cleveland Interchurch Council will serve as staff to the Task Force.

(2) To hire and train two part-time staff people who will be partly responsible for recruitment of students, matching of tutors to students and supervision of tutors.

(3) To establish two Literacy Centers in the inner city of Cleveland, one on the near west side and one on the near east side.

(4) To recruit and train enough volunteer tutors to tutor 50 people in each area for 2-3 hours per week, using the Laubach method.

(5) To train three to five people so that they can serve as Laubach trainers to prepare tutors on an on-going basis. Trainers must learn to tutor, tutor students, and help in three training workshops to become qualified. The Education Coordinator, the Literacy Center directors, and additional volunteers will become trainers.[21]

Included in the original proposal were procedures for recruiting tutors and students.

Community groups were invited to awareness meetings where representatives from the Laubach Literacy organization presented their findings on the need for a Cleveland literacy program. The Laubach representatives were persistent and forceful in promoting the need for the development and support of Project: LEARN. An article about the program in the Cleveland Press led to the recruitment of fifty volunteers. In October of 1974 a workshop

was held on volunteer tutoring of illiterates; a second soon followed, and community interest in Project: LEARN began to grow. Area churches were involved early on, and some of the public library systems in Greater Cleveland offered support as well.[22]

Recruitment of tutors continued, with newspaper articles in the major dailies and neighborhood papers and brochures distributed at speaking engagements and on displays. Another effective technique involved recruiting in churches when tutor training sessions were held there.

Student recruitment was accomplished easily through radio and television, as well as from referrals of other agencies and through word of mouth. The organization always had a continuing waiting list of at least fifty students.[23]

Project: LEARN was formally incorporated in the state of Ohio in 1976. By December, 1979 Project: LEARN had completed five years of service in Cleveland. A Planning Board composed of tutors with church affiliations filled the role of a Task Force. With the staff, the Planning Board drew up a constitution and by-laws and developed policies used in the daily operation of Project: LEARN.

By 1979 staffing included a full-time director, a full-time student-tutor coordinator, and a full-time secretary. A centrally located center was established to serve the entire Cleveland area.

The basic goal of tutoring one hundred students per year was more than doubled each year. By the end of 1979 more than one thousand students had been served and more than one thousand tutors had been trained and certified. Project: LEARN also now

had seven fully certified literacy tutor trainers, three learning to be trainers, and a certified trainer in teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).[24]

Current Mission Statement and Purposes

Project: LEARN's Mission Statement reveals that in 1993 the organization remains focused on combating adult illiteracy:

> Project: LEARN's purpose is to enable illiterate adults to acquire the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills needed to solve the problems they encounter in their daily lives, to take full advantage of the opportunities they find in their environment, and to participate in the various social, political and economic affairs of their communities.[25]

Its Amended Articles of Incorporation state its purposes as follows:

> (1) to train volunteers to teach adults to read at a level of functional literacy;
>
> (2) to receive funds by donation, bequest, devise or otherwise; to hold, invest and disburse the same; and
>
> (3) to do anything necessary, incidental or ancillary to the accomplishment of its purposes, including, for such purposes the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or corresponding section of any future United States Internal Revenue law.[26]

The Project: LEARN, Inc. Code of Regulations, Article II, states that the purposes delineated in the Articles of Incorporation will be supported through programs and methods that include the following:

> (a) Recruit and train volunteer literacy tutors, English tutors for foreign speakers, trainers, writers and leaders;
>
> (b) Promote and encourage the training of volunteer tutors, trainers, writers and leaders;
>
> (c) Recruit and teach adult non-readers and low-level readers basic literacy skills;
>
> (d) Teach non-English-speaking adults to speak, understand, read and write English;

(e) Establish and assist affiliated Laubach-oriented regional and local councils and projects;

(f) Coordinate the programs of the corporation and the affiliated councils and projects with those recommended by the Laubach Literacy Action Association and Laubach Literacy International, together with any other programs which will further the purposes of the corporation; and

(g) Stimulate public interest to further the endeavors of the corporation.[27]

Organization and Structure

Project: LEARN today is an independent nonprofit educational corporation and an affiliate of Laubach International. Originally it was under the sponsorship of the Interchurch Council of Greater Cleveland. However, in June of 1990 it was agreed by Project: LEARN's Planning Board and the Board of Trustees of the Interchurch Council that the literacy organization could best serve broad-based community adult literacy needs by becoming an independent program. The organization received a 501(c)(3) designation to be an independent nonprofit organization. As such, Project: LEARN has been able to raise more funding from its revenue sources, reduce administrative costs (a thirteen percent administrative charge based on annual program expenses had been required by the Interchurch Council), control supply costs, add interest income, generate increased pro bono services, and be recognized by funders which were unable to support it as part of a religious organization.[28] In the fall of 1992 Project: LEARN became a full-fledged United Way agency.[29]

Governance

Project: LEARN's Board of Trustees has responsibility for making policy and for the general management of the corporation.

The Board must have at least three but not more than thirty trustees. Terms are for two years, with no trustee serving for more than six consecutive years.[30] The Board elects the officers of the corporation: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Subject to the discretion of the Board of Trustees, the President has general supervision of the affairs of the corporation. The Treasurer publishes the Annual Financial Report at the annual meeting of the members and reports monthly to the Board. The Treasurer prepares the Annual Budget, submits it to the Board for approval, and presents it at the annual meeting.[31]

Committees

The President appoints members to committees to plan and administer various aspects of the operations of the corporation.[32] The Planning Committee is responsible for investigating new directions, for monitoring management issues, and for ensuring maintenance of the Board structure. It also serves as the nominating committee of the Board. The Financial Affairs Committee is chaired by the Treasurer and monitors the status of financial matters, as well as attempts to solicit funds and increase the base of support. The Advocacy Committee is empowered to respond to legislative issues that can impact on the work of Project: LEARN or on the students who are enrolled in its programs. The Public Awareness Committee assists in the ongoing effort to keep Project: LEARN's name and work before the public. The Special Events Committee helps to build public awareness through the annual meeting in March and the anniversary celebration in December. The Personnel Committee is responsible

for the administration of the Personnel Policy and its grievance procedures. It also reviews salary schedules, the retirement contribution, and other employee benefits.[33]

Membership in Project: LEARN

Membership in Project: LEARN is divided into two designations. Class A members are active or recently (within the last six months) active certified tutors and current students enrolled in classes. Class B members are any persons currently serving on the Board of Trustees. Both categories of members are considered voting members, although proposed changes to the Articles of Incorporation or Code of Regulations do not have to be submitted to Class A members for their vote. However, they must be notified of such changes and have the opportunity to voice their opinions on such matters.[34]

Administration/Management

The Director of Project: LEARN has overall responsibility for the management and development of the organization and its programs. The Director reports to the Board of Trustees and works with staff, volunteers, and committees.[35] From 1974 to October, 1992 Nancy Oakley served as Project: LEARN's Director. She retired in 1992, and Richard Peterson was hired as the new Director. Peterson had previously served as director of the public education ministry at the Interchurch Council.[36]

Project LEARN's organization chart indicates that the Director supervises the Associate Director and the office Administrative Assistant. He also has responsibility over the functioning of the Workforce Education program, the Downtown Adult

Reading Center, the Computer Lab and its staff, and the Books for People and Writers Group efforts.

The Associate Director manages the Basic Literacy Services, which are staffed by an ESOL Specialist, a Corrections Literacy Coordinator, a Neighborhood Coordinator, a Library Specialist, and a Basic Literacy Assistant. The Associate Director also oversees the Volunteers and Volunteer Trainers and the Student Support Group.[37]

Facilities

Project: LEARN's main headquarters is its downtown Cleveland office. This is a rented building which houses executive offices, a computer lab, the Downtown Adult Reading Center classroom, the Books for People area, and the Library for New Readers.

Project: LEARN has three Neighborhood Literacy Centers in churches in the Cleveland community. These are the Collinwood, Archwood-Denison, and St. Clair-Superior centers. Several area libraries also provide facilities for Project: LEARN students and tutors.[38]

Programs

Project: LEARN's Basic Literacy program was the first of its services, and it remains the major focus of the organization. Volunteer tutors are recruited and then trained in a ten-hour pre-service workshop. Potential students for the program are recruited and interviewed, and those found to be appropriate for Project: LEARN tutoring are placed on a waiting list. Students must be at least sixteen years old and out of school, and must read at the third grade level or below. There are no fees for

students. The trained volunteers are matched to the waiting students based on their times available to meet for tutoring and their area of residence in Greater Cleveland. The matched pairs meet twice a week in ninety minute sessions.[39]

In 1992, 1,365 students registered for the Basic Literacy program. Project: LEARN was able to provide tutoring to a total of 1,065 adult learners for the year. Eighty-one percent of the total enrollment, or 858 students, were in the program for six months or longer. This is a significant measure of success, because usually approximately one grade level is gained for every fifty hours of lessons. The Project: LEARN training team, made up primarily of volunteers, conducted ten literacy workshops in 1992 and certified 324 new volunteers for basic literacy.[40]

The English for Speakers of Other Languages program (ESOL) serves the twenty-five percent of Project: LEARN students who are foreign language speakers learning to speak, understand, and read and write in English. Volunteer tutors for this program attend fifteen hours of training. The organization recruits and assesses non-English speaking adults and places those who are eligible for the program on a waiting list to be matched with a tutor. Volunteer tutors are sometimes given two or three students to work with together.[41]

In 1992 the ESOL program tutored four hundred students in speaking, reading, and writing English. Thirty-seven new tutors were certified for this program.[42]

Project: LEARN's Downtown Adult Reading Center is a Pre-GED fourth- to eighth-grade reading level program with a specific

content-based curriculum. Literature, American history, basic science, spelling, writing, usage and grammar, and math are taught to small groups of students. The program operates as a joint venture of Project: LEARN and the Cleveland Public Schools Office of Adult and Continuing Education, with staff from both organizations and ten volunteer teachers. The school year is September through July.[43]

In 1992, 140 students attended classes twice a week to move beyond basic literacy and begin preparing for the GED High School Equivalency Examination.[44]

Project: LEARN expanded its Jail Literacy program in 1992 as inmates at the Cuyahoga County Corrections Center and the Women's Pre-Release Center were tutored. Six specially trained volunteers and a full-time staff member provided 182 inmates with a total of 788 hours of instruction.[45]

Several years ago Project: LEARN initiated a program at the Mansfield Reformatory in which inmates were trained to teach basic literacy skills to other inmates. The project eventually became a permanent part of the educational program at Mansfield, and Project: LEARN withdrew once the program was able to continue without its supervision.[46]

Project: LEARN's Workplace Education program was begun in 1990 as an attempt to improve the basic skills of entry level workers who are particularly vulnerable to changes in the workplace. These targeted workers have low skill levels that prevent them from adjusting well to new ways of working. The project also serves to help employers initiate staff development

programs that will meet the needs of their lowest functioning level employees.[47] In 1992 Workplace Education offered, for a modest cost, assessment, planning, and education services to twelve different companies.[48]

In 1992 Project: LEARN opened its Library for New Readers at its downtown office. The Library has five hundred volumes for circulation to students, as well as a wide range of specialized reference materials.[49]

In November of 1992, Project: LEARN opened a new computer reading laboratory funded with $150,000 donated by the Cleveland Plain Dealer. The Computer Assisted Adult Learning Lab supplements the services of all of Project: LEARN's programs with eight computers that use colorful graphics to highlight reading lessons combined with math, writing, and science.[50] The state-of-the-art equipment and software also teach students keyboarding and computer skills. Project: LEARN uses the lab to decrease the time students must wait to enroll in programs, and to increase the pace of learning.[51]

The Project: LEARN Writers Group, now in its fourteenth year, has written and published 114 books on a wide variety of topics. These books are available as supplementary reading for Project: LEARN students and other adult learners. New readers need to read at least 1000 words a day at their level, and these books by the Writers Group are widely read. They have greatly helped students improve their reading skills. There are both fiction and nonfiction titles, with some offering practical information and others just for fun.

In 1992 the Writers Group also published eight editions of the Project: LEARN Student News, a newsletter written for students, and four editions of the Project: LEARN Student Outlook, written by students themselves.[52]

In 1983 Project: LEARN began distributing to area programs that serve the needy new books and materials that had been donated to Project: LEARN by publishers. In 1992 Books for People donated 41,101 books to more than fifty organizations.[53]

Books for Adult New Readers

In 1978 Project: LEARN obtained funds from the George Gund Foundation for the Project: LEARN Library Services Project to develop a sample collection and an annotated bibliography for adult new readers. This was done in response to the scarcity of low level reading materials for adults in Cleveland's libraries. By 1991 a fifth revised edition of this bibliography was published, and it is available to literacy projects and libraries throughout the United States.

Materials included in the 1991 bibliography, entitled Books for Adult New Readers, had to meet many criteria, some of which are: a reading level not higher than seventh grade; short paragraphs, short chapters, and reasonable book length; cover and title appealing to adults, indicative of the book's contents, and not showing the reader to be an illiterate or a slow learner; adult characters and situations with information useful in an adult's everyday life; materials suitable for independent study with only minimal, if any, tutor assistance required; information pertinent to Cleveland and Ohio; and a reasonable price.

Nonfiction selections emphasize information in five subject areas vital for adults to be familiar with in order to function effectively in today's society: consumer economics, occupational knowledge, community resources, health, and government and law. Books offering a core cultural literature were especially emphasized. Also desirable were materials teaching four basic skills: communications skills, including reading and writing; computation skills; problem-solving skills; and skills in interpersonal relationships. General coping skills have been the main focus. The needs of public libraries were considered for each title selected, because it is very important that libraries provide access to appropriate and meaningful leisure reading at accessible levels. Librarians from six area public library systems were included on the Library Services Committee which examined the new titles added to the 1991 bibliography.

New areas in the literacy field added to the 1991 edition of Books for Adult New Readers are Family Reading, Students' Writings, and Periodicals. The Family Reading section gives titles appropriate for low level readers to read aloud to children. This is a skill that is very important to many adult students. Also, reading activity in the home has a strong influence on literacy levels in children. The Students' Writings section emphasizes materials that can serve to demystify reading by showing that printed words can represent students' own language. They also provide examples of what can be accomplished by others in the same situation. The Periodicals section is included in the bibliography because several appealing magazines

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and one newspaper for adult new readers are now available.

Librarians and educators are implored to develop collections of relevant books, separate from other collections, that are well marked, publicized, and used.[54]

Friends of Project: LEARN

The Friends of Project: LEARN was established in 1986 as a volunteer funding support group. Over the years the group has conducted successful benefits and has raised money to support specific programs. Until Project: LEARN ended its status as an agency of the Interchurch Council and became a United Way agency, the Friends group operated as an independent 501(c)(3) organization. In 1990 it established a Literacy Fund for the purpose of helping to ensure Project: LEARN's future service to undereducated adults in Greater Cleveland.[55]

When Project: LEARN became an independent organization, it no longer was necessary for the Friends to maintain funds raised on the organization's behalf as a separate account. As a result, the Friends' budget and funds are now a part of Project: LEARN's budget and funds. The Literacy Fund has also been transferred to Project: LEARN's account[56] and is managed by an Investment Committee composed primarily of members of the Board of Trustees.[57]

The Friends continue to conduct an annual fundraising event that provides much needed revenue and brings the issue of literacy to the public's attention. In 1992 the Friends sponsored a tribute to Nancy Oakley, Project: LEARN's retiring founder and director. That event raised $31,000 for the organization.[58]

Student Support Group

The Project: LEARN Student Support Group is composed of students who coordinate special projects to help their fellow students. This group coordinates the annual student recognition honoring those students who complete the basic literacy program.[89]

Funding

From an initial foundation grant of $30,000 spread over three years, Project: LEARN's funding needs have grown to support an expected total budget $509,093 for 1993. The largest contribution category, part of the program's unrestricted revenue, comes from United Way Services and totals $90,500, or 17.8% of total revenue. Also unrestricted is $30,000 raised by the Friends of Project: LEARN and $25,000 contributed by the Cleveland Plain Dealer from its annual Spelling Bee fundraiser for the program. The total amount of unrestricted funds expected for 1993 is $216,925.

Restricted program income is anticipated to reach $222,631. A total of $116,500 is earmarked for Workforce Education, with $40,000 coming from both the Gund Foundation and the United States Department of Education. Workforce fees paid by employers should add another $20,000. The Corrections Education category will receive $20,000 from the Cuyahoga County Commissioners as well as $10,000 from the Cleveland Foundation. Total restricted funding earmarked for this program is expected to be $31,500. Project: LEARN's Computer Lab will receive restricted funds of $52,631. About half, or $26,000, will be provided by the Cleveland Plain Dealer, with another $16,631 donated by the ALCOA Foundation and $10,000 provided by the Junior League of Cleveland. BP America

will fund the English for Speakers of Other Languages program with a $7000 contribution. The Ohio Department of Education will provide $15,000 for the Basic Literacy program.

Other income, including specified and unspecified grants, should total $69,537.[60]

Project: LEARN has a history of strong support from both corporations and foundations. The organization's 1990 Business Plan indicated that forty-eight businesses and twenty-six foundations had contributed funds over the years.[61]

Budget

Salaries and wages for six full-time and seven part-time staff members account for the largest category of expenses, with $232,377 budgeted in this area for 1993. Office rent is the second highest category at $53,601, followed by employee health and retirement benefits at $30,844; professional fees and contract services at $28,400; supplies at $26,500; payroll taxes at $24,749; and purchases of equipment at $22,522.[62]

Tutor Training

Project: LEARN uses volunteer reading tutors to teach illiterate adults to read. This one-to-one relationship emphasizing personal attention and relating the reading program to the student's goals is at the core of Project: LEARN's success.

Training for tutors consists of a basic ten-hour Laubach Literacy Action workshop, plus additional training if the tutor will have a student from the English for Speakers of Other Languages program.[63] Two five-hour training workshops are usually held on successive Saturdays at the Project: LEARN office in

downtown Cleveland.[64]

When a tutor completes these workshops, the Project: LEARN staff will match the volunteer tutor with a student. The tutor is expected to meet with his student for approximately one and one-half hours twice a week for a minimum duration of one year. The meeting place can be at the Project: LEARN Center, or at a religious institution, a library, or in a community center in an area of Cleveland convenient for both participants.

Tutors are expected to develop relationships that offer friendly encouragement and support to their students. In the training sessions tips are offered on how to accomplish this. By being supportive and by not criticizing the student's mistakes, the tutor can encourage him to continue to respond to difficult materials. It is also important that the tutor meet regularly and punctually with the student.

Tutors are expected to report to the Student/Tutor Coordinator monthly to report on student progress. Any changes in class schedule should be reported as well. The tutor is also required to keep a record of the student's progress.

Personality characteristics that Project: LEARN considers valuable in a tutor include: dependability and promptness; a sincere interest in and the ability to relate to other people; compatability with others' needs; a respect for confidentiality; being literate; flexibility; friendliness; patience; optimism; and a sense of humor.[65]

Educational Materials

The program used by Project: LEARN to teach reading skills is

the Laubach Way to Reading. Grade levels covered range from zero to approximately six. Skill Book 1 deals with sounds and names of letters, and has thirteen lessons. Book 2 covers short vowel sounds in fifteen lessons. Book 3 covers long vowel sounds in twenty-four lessons, and Book 4 works on other vowel sounds and other consonant sounds in twenty-three lessons. Each book teaches concepts and grammar and has a correlated reader, checkup, and diploma. The teacher's manual tells the tutor exactly what to do for each lesson.

Skill Books are designed to develop phonics skills to help with word recognition. Writing is taught in addition to reading.

After a student has completed this literacy program, he can continue on to a higher level series, or he can enroll in the Project: LEARN Adult Reading Center or another Adult Basic Education program.[66]

Outlook for the Future

Project: LEARN's future appears to be both exciting and challenging. While volunteer basic literacy tutoring remains the organization's primary focus, newer ventures such as Jail Literacy, Workplace Literacy, and the Downtown Adult Reading Center have been successful and offer areas for growth. New Director Richard Peterson sees the Workplace Literacy program, in particular, as being full of possibilities as the general public and additional employers become aware of its importance. It also has the potential for being a money-making proposition for Project: LEARN through its corporate assessment and teaching fees.[67] It could greatly expand if workplace computers eventually

tie in to those at Project: LEARN's new computer lab.[68]

The Writers Group has been producing books for new adult readers over the years, and Project: LEARN has an interest in using desktop publishing to develop a more professional looking product that could be marketed around the country as another revenue producing activity.

Goals for Project: LEARN's Board of Trustees to consider in the near future include both programming directions and funding support. To contribute to Project: LEARN's financial stability, the Literacy Fund should probably be built to a level that equals the organization's annual operating budget of approximately $500,000.[69]

V. CONCLUSION

Project: LEARN staff and volunteers have made a substantial impact in combating illiteracy in the Greater Cleveland area. For over eighteen years they have tutored illiterate adults in reading and writing and have improved the quality of life for thousands of people. In addition, they have been advocates for the undereducated and have made the community acutely aware of this problem. By remaining focused on the problem of illiteracy, the Project: LEARN organization has had a stronger, more extensive impact in this area than if it had branched out into many other areas. By accepting only grants and funds that relate to its principal mission of reducing illiteracy, Project: LEARN has been able to follow a straight and narrow course toward its original purpose.

Another reason for Project: LEARN's success is its caring attitude toward its students. A student support group; a student newsletter; referrals to other social service agencies; donations of bus tickets for transportation; provision of free materials, books, and tutoring; respect for student privacy; encouragement of student input and participation in the organization; and a program geared toward helping the student meet his own learning goals have all added to the success and longevity of Project: LEARN.

Similarly, strong support for tutors plays a significant role in the continued accomplishments of this literacy program.

Attendance at the March, 1993 annual meeting also gave insight into Project: LEARN's strength: everyone, whether a student, a Board member, a tutor, or a staff person, was warmly

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welcomed and treated like a valuable part of the Project: LEARN organization. All involved with the program showed a willingness to work hard and to work together to combat illiteracy.

As national attention focuses more sharply on the tragedy of adult illiteracy, Project: LEARN will remain a model program that can guide the development of other groups and organizations to meet the challenge of eradicating this contemporary problem.

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